

Falafel with Tabbouleh

Cucumbers are still in season, and that makes me think of Tzatziki Sauce. And tzatziki sauce makes me think of the Middle Eastern street food. Let's make falafel today! It's like having fried chicken, only better! What a great meal to share with dinner guests! It took me some time to get falafel right. America's Test Kitchen was a big help with their suggestions on minimizing use of the food processor, and how to use flour in this recipe. (See "What I've Learned From This Recipe.") You will need to have soaked 2 C. dry chickpeas (garbanzo beans) overnight to make this meal today. (Canned beans don't work here...too much moisture.)

Preparation time: 3 hours (Including chill time for the falafel dough) - Serves: 4

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Prep about 2-2/3 C. coarsely chopped onion today. Use 2 C. onion for falafel, 1/3 C. onion for Tzatziki Sauce and 1/4 C. for Tahini Sauce. Prep 7 cloves of garlic today: use 3 whole, peeled cloves for the falafel, 1 whole peeled clove for the Tzatziki Sauce and 1 whole peeled clove for the Tahini Sauce. Use 2 cloves chopped for the Tabouleh Salad. You'll need at least 4 C. canola oil to cook the falafel.

Falafel

3 cloves garlic (whole, peeled)
2 C. yellow onion (coarsely chopped)
4 C. dry chickpeas (soaked overnight)
1-1/2 C. parsley (washed and patted dry)
1-1/2 C. cilantro (leaves and stems)
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. ground coriander
1/2 C. flour (whisked with 2/3 C. water)
4 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt

4 C. canola oil (for cooking falafel)

Tabbouleh Salad

2 cloves garlic (smashed and chopped)
2/3 C. (4) green onions (washed and chopped, including green portion)
3/4 C. cucumber (peeled and chopped)
1 T. mint leaves (chopped)
3/4 C. parsley (chopped)
2-1/2 C. cooked bulgur

1/4 C. fresh lemon juice
3 T. olive oil
pinch of salt
1 C. Roma tomatoes (chopped)

Tzatziki Sauce

1/2 C. plain, nonfat yogurt
1 clove garlic (whole, peeled)
1/3 C. onion (coarsely chopped)
1 T. olive oil
2 T. lemon juice
1 large cucumber (peeled, seeded, quartered)
2 T. fresh dill
1/4 tsp. Asian Pepper sauce

Tahini Sauce

1 clove garlic (whole, peeled)
1 T. extra-virgin olive oil
2 tsp. rice wine or white balsamic vinegar
1/4 C. onion (coarsely chopped)
pinch of salt
1/4 C. tahini
1/4 tsp. Asian Pepper sauce
1/3 C. low-sodium vegetable broth

Roasted Vegetables

Baste for Vegetables:

2 T. lemon juice (1/2 of a lemon)
2 tsp. olive oil
1 tsp. low-sodium soy sauce
1/4 C. low-sodium veggie broth

Vegetables:

3 large carrots (sliced lengthwise in 1/4" slices)
two 8"-10" zucchini (sliced in 1/2" thick slices)
2 red bell peppers (seeded and quartered)
2 green bell peppers (seeded and quartered)
2 tsp. canola oil
4 whole rounds of pita bread

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Make tabbouleh salad and sauces early in the day. The falafel dough needs to chill for 2 hours. Wait to Grill vegetables until just before you are ready to dine.

Tabbouleh

* Before you start, bring 1 C. bulgur and 2 C. water to a boil. Remove from heat, cover and let stand for 20 minutes.

1. Place chopped garlic, green onions, cucumber, mint leaves and parsley in a large bowl.
2. Add cooked bulgur and toss well.
3. Mix lemon juice, oil and salt and pour over salad. Toss well.
4. Add the chopped tomatoes and toss one more time. Chill in fridge.

Tzatziki Sauce

Combine ingredients. Blend to a coarse texture in food processor. Transfer to a bowl, cover and refrigerate.

Tahini Sauce

Combine ingredients. Blend well in food processor. Transfer to a bowl, cover and refrigerate.

Assemble:

Falafel

Drain the chickpeas and pat them dry with a kitchen towel.

Combine garlic, onion, chickpeas, parsley, cilantro, cumin and coriander in a large bowl and toss.

Using a food processor blend 1/2 of the chickpea mixture at a time. Blend about 5 seconds, wipe down the sides of the bowl with a spatula and blend another 5 seconds. Repeat as needed, but don't over process the mixture. You want it to have a texture like cooked bulgur. Return all blended ingredients to the large bowl.

Whisk the flour together with 2/3 C. water until smooth. Cook 10 seconds at a time in the microwave, whisking between each 10 second burst, until the mixture is thick enough to barely drop off a teaspoon (a total of about 60 seconds). Whisk baking powder and salt into thickened flour. Fold the thickened flour into the chickpea mixture until well incorporated.

Cook:

1. Form all falafel pieces into balls and flatten slightly. I use a soup spoon as a guide to get all pieces consistent in size. Lay them out on cookie sheets lined with parchment paper.
2. Heat 4 C. canola oil in a Dutch oven. Once oil is hot (350°), slide falafel pieces into oil. Cook 6 or so pieces at a time. Keep turning in oil until golden brown. Check your oil temperature between batches so it stays consistent.

Remove and drain on paper towels. Once all falafel are cooked, place in an uncovered cookie sheet in a 150° oven while you grill veggies.

Roast the Vegetables and Serve the Meal!

Preheat oven to 400°

Roasted Vegetables

Allow 20 minutes to cook the vegetables.

1. Mix basting ingredients together in a small bowl and set aside.
2. Par boil the carrot slices for 2-minutes in salted water before you grill them.
3. Start with carrots. Grill on a hot, oiled surface until you get grill marks on the slices. It will take only a minute or so per carrot slice. Lightly grill other veggies.
4. Place all vegetables on an oiled cookie sheet.
5. Brush vegetables with basting mixture and roast in a preheated 400° oven. Roast 5 minutes per side and serve hot.

Serve the Meal

Warm some pita bread and place on a plate in the center of the table.

Serve this meal family-style with the bowl of tabbouleh alongside a platter of falafel with vegetables. Serve sauces in separate bowls.

Allow diners to help themselves.

What I've Learned from this Recipe

Yup! I make a big batch of falafel when I cook it. The leftovers are great and they freeze well.

Getting the falafel mixed correctly is one of the most important parts of making this Middle-eastern staple. Don't over-blend the ingredients. You want a coarse grind of the mixture, about the texture of cooked bulgur. Adding the cooked, thickened flour paste mixture to the ground ingredients seems to be the best way to get light falafel pieces that hold together when handling and cooking.

When cooking falafel, be careful not to let the oil get too hot. Ideal falafel pieces will be light to medium brown, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside.

Let us know what you think, and ask any questions you may have! chezdon@plate6.com